Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Trend underemployment falls to 8.3%

Unemployment and Underemployment

The monthly trend unemployment rate remained steady at 5.5 per cent in February 2018, according to latest figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today.

"While the unemployment rate remained steady, the underemployment rate decreased by 0.1 percentage points to 8.3 per cent over the quarter, and is now at its lowest point since November 2015," the Chief Economist for the ABS, Bruce Hockman, said.

Over the past year, the trend underutilisation rate, which includes both unemployment and underemployment, decreased by 0.6 percentage points to 13.8 per cent.

Employment and hours

Monthly trend full-time employment increased for the 16th straight month in February 2018. Full-time employment grew by a further 8,000 persons in February, while part-time employment increased by 12,000 persons, underpinning a total increase in employment of 19,000 persons.

"Full-time employment has now increased by around 293,000 persons over the past year, and makes up the majority of the 400,000 increase in employment," Mr Hockman said.

Over the past year, trend employment increased by 3.3 per cent, which is above the average year-on-year growth over the past 20 years (1.9 per cent).

The trend monthly hours worked decreased slightly, by 1.4 million hours (0.1 per cent), with the annual figure continuing to show strong growth (2.7 per cent).

The labour force participation rate increased to 65.7 per cent, the highest it has been since December 2010. The female labour force participation also increased, to a further historical high of 60.6 per cent.

States and Territories

Over the past year, the states and territories with the strongest annual growth in trend employment were the ACT (4.7 per cent) Queensland (4.6 per cent) and New South Wales (3.9 per cent).

Seasonally adjusted data

The seasonally adjusted number of persons employed increased by 18,000 in February 2018. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased to 5.6 per cent and the labour force

participation rate increased by less than 0.1 percentage points to 65.7 per cent.

More details are in the February 2018 issue of Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0). In addition, further information, including regional labour market information, can be found in the upcoming February 2018 issue of Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001), due for release on 29 March 2018. Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly (cat. no. 6291.0.55.003), which includes employment by industry, is also due for release on 29 March.

These publications are available for free download (after release) from the ABS website: https://www.abs.gov.au.

Media note:

- When reporting ABS data, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) must be attributed as the source.
- For media requests and interviews, contact the ABS Communications and Partnerships Section on 1300 175 070 (8.30am - 5pm Monday - Friday AEST).
- The ABS produces trend estimates to provide a more reliable indicator of the underlying behaviour of the Labour Force series. Trend estimates were introduced into the Labour Force series in the mid 1980s and are available back to February 1978. Trend estimates are considered the best indicators of the underlying behaviour in the labour market. See paragraphs 28 to 37 of the Explanatory Notes in Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0).
- In simple terms, the ABS defines ‘unemployment’ as persons who are not working, are actively looking for work and available to start work in the survey reference week. ‘Underemployment’ refers to people who are working but would like to be working more hours. ‘Underutilisation’ refers to the combined unemployed and underemployed populations. Information on other related groups (eg. ‘marginally attached’ people) can be found in Participation, Job Search and Mobility (cat. no. 6226.0), available annually in respect of February.
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